

Message Text

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S E C R E T KINSHASA 6307

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CG PGOV PFOR PINS US

SUBJECT: ABORTIVE COUP - MOBUTU'S POSITION ASSESSED

REF: A) KINSHASA 6056; B) KINSHASA 518; C) KINSHASA 5364

1. SUMMARY. MOBUTU'S INTERNAL POSITION HAS BEEN WEAKENED BY PLOT AND AFTERMATH. HIS REGIME DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE IN DANGER, BUT POLITICAL CONCERNS ARE LIKELY TO OVERSHADOW SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ONES FOR SOME TIME. ZAIRE-US RELATIONS HAVE SUFFERED, BUT MOBUTU IS WILLING TO EXPLORE WAYS TO IMPROVE THEM. END SUMMARY.

2. MOBUTU'S MAIN SOURCE OF STRENGTH HAS BEEN HIS CREDIBILITY AS A LEADER. CONTRIBUTING TO THIS CREDIBILITY HAVE BEEN HIS HISTORIC ROLE HERE, HIS PERSONAL CONTROL OF ARMY, HIS TIGHT REIN ON GOVERNMENT AND PARTY APPARATUS, AND HIS WIDE POPULAR ACCEPTANCE. POPULAR SUPPORT BEGAN TO ERODE LAST YEAR BECAUSE OF MANY FACTORS INCLUDING IMPORT RESTRICTIONS, INFLATION, AND GROWING RESENTMENT OVER BLATANT FAVORITISM MOBUTU WAS SHOWING TOWARD HIGH PARTY OFFICIALS, PARTICULARLY UNDER ZAIRIANIZATION PROGRAM. LAST DECEMBER, FOLLOWING TRIPS TO CHINA AND NORTH KOREA, MOBUTU ACTED WITH CUSTOMARY IMPULSIVENESS TO REDRESS THE BALANCE BY PROCLAIMING AN AMBITIOUS SCHEME FOR "RADICALIZING" THE REVOLUTION (REF B). THIS SWEEPING EGALITARIAN PROGRAM

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CALLED FOR MAJOR SACRIFICES BY THE ELITE CLASSES. IT

ALIENATED ELEMENTS IN THE ARMY AND PARTY LEADERSHIP WITHOUT BOLSTERING MOBUTU'S POPULAR SUPPORT VERY MUCH. A CLIMATE OF CONUSION AND MUFFLED RESENTMENT DEVELOPED AND MOBUTU'S CREDIBILITY SUFFERED. HIS EFFORTS TO HALT TREND WERE ONLY PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL. THEY INCLUDED EXTENSIVE TOUR OF ZAIRE ADDRESSING WOMEN'S GROUPS AND SUCH QUICK-FIX MEASURES AS PRICE CEILINGS ON BEER, CUTTING RENTS BY HALF, AND CLOSING NIGHT CLUBS.

3. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, MOBUTU'S DISCLOSURE LAST MONTH THAT THERE HAD BEEN A PLOT TO KILL HIM, AND HIS VIRTUAL ACCUSATION THAT IT HAS BEEN STAGED WITH US HELP, LOOKED LIKE AN ATTEMPT TO DIVERT PUBLIC ATTENTION. HOWEVER, FACTS AND MOTIVES ARE STILL OBSCURE. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT MOBUTU BELIEVES HIS LIFE WAS THREATENED AND THAT THERE WAS SOME KIND OF US INVOLVEMENT. SECURITY PRECAUTIONS SURROUNDING HIS MOVES HAVE BECOME ELABORATE. BUT OPINIONS VARY HERE CONCERNING EXTENT TO WHICH HE MAY ALSO BE USING PLOT AS EXCUSE TO CONDUCT MAJOR SHAKE-UP. HE REFUSES TO PRESIDE OVER MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND POLITICAL BUREAU BECAUSE HE SAYS THERE ARE TRAITORS THERE. ON JULY 2 HE FIRED A MINISTER AND SEVERAL GENERALS AND WARNED THAT MORE HEADS WILL ROLL. LOCAL PRESS, DOUBTLESS REFLECTING MOBUTU'S THINKING, IS CALLING FOR MAJOR "STRUCTURAL" REFORMS OF GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS INVOLVING TAKE-OVER BY TRUE MOBUTISTS. DENUNCIATION OF SUPERIORS IS ENCOURAGED AND MOST KEY OFFICIALS ARE UP TIGHT.

4. MOBUTU'S POSITION HAS BEEN WEAKENED AS RESULT OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS. ARMY LOYALTY HAS BEEN STRAINED. HIGH PARTY OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN ALIENATED. SEEDS OF FUTURE DISSENSION HAVE BEEN WIDELY SOWN. NEVERTHELESS MOBUTU HAS THE INITIATIVE AND IS IN FULL CONTROL. HE HAS GATHERED DECISION-MAKING POWERS EVEN MORE CLOSELY INTO HIS OWN HANDS. PRESIDENTIAL DECREES ARE ISSUING FORTH AT GREAT RATE. ADVERSE EFFECTS ON GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY ARE ALREADY VISIBLE, BUT THIS CONSIDERATION IS CLEARLY SECONDARY NOW. WHAT MOVES MOBUTU MAY BE PLANNING INTERNALLY ARE NOT YET CLEAR, ALTHOUGH HIS ASSIGNMENT OF ARMY COLONEL TO POSITION OF PTT MINISTER

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ON JULY 8 COULD BE AN INDICATION OF TREND TOWARD MILITARY GOVERNMENT.

6. THROUGHOUT PLOT CRISIS MOBUTU HAS KEPT OPEN HIS PRIVATE LINES OF COMMUNICATION TO US. HE HAS ASSURED US THAT AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN ZAIRE IS UNDER NO THREAT (AND WE HAVE SEEN NONE), HE HAS TOLD US HE CONTINUES TO WELCOME AMERICAN INVESTMENT IN ZAIRE, HE WAS PLEASED TO

WELCOME VANCE MISSION, HE HAS QUIETLY COOPERATED WITH
US IN THE TANZANIAN KIDNAP CASE, AND HE HAS, WITH SOME
UNFORTUNATE LAPSES, REINED IN LOCAL PRESS CAMPAIGN
AGAINST US. HOWEVER, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT A RETURN TO CLOSE
RELATIONSHIP OF EARLIER YEARS IS OUT OF QUESTION (EVEN IF
IT WERE DESIRABLE). IT WILL TAKE TIME TO WORK OUT A NEW
AND MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY ONE. IN HIGHLY POLITICIZED
ATMOSPHERE NOW PREVAILING, WE CAN EXPECT TO MAKE SCANT
HEADWAY IN THIS DIRECTION EXCEPT AS WE CAN GET AND HOLD
MOBUTU'S PERSONAL ATTENDTION, IN FIRST INSTANCE, AND THEN
FIND MEMBERS OF HIS GOVERNMENT WHO ARE PREPARED TO ASSUME
RESPONSIBILITY OF WORKING WITH US DESPITE LINGERING PLOT
FEVER. ANDREW

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